

Rail workers disappointed in decision to declassify Armidale rail corridor

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2 March 2020: The decision to declassify the rail corridor between Armidale and Tenterfield is disappointing and short-sighted, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union said today.

The call comes after reports suggest that Armidale Regional Council members recently resolved to support the declassification of the rail corridor in the region.

RTBU NSW Secretary, Alex Claassens, said that while temporary measures to allow disused rail corridors to be used for recreational activities can be a great idea, declassifying the rail corridor and removing any future opportunities to re-open the rail line are short-sighted.

“We’ve long said that the disused rail corridors are goldmines for local communities and this one is no different,” Mr Claassens said.

“There are examples of rail corridors being reopened for a whole range of innovative purposes, like for transporting water between sites by trains. During a time of drought and high unemployment, it seems short-sighted to rob a community of those opportunities.

“There are disused rail lines in many parts of the state that are begging to be reopened or, at a minimum, properly preserved.

“Reopening disused rail lines like the Armidale to Tenterfield line makes a lot of sense. It’s

disappointing to see those opportunities taken off the table.

“It’s the clear view of the union that rail trails should be developed only as temporary measures, to ensure rail corridors and infrastructure are protected and used productively until such time as rail services can be restored.

“Particularly at the moment, when our regional communities are being hit hard by drought and unemployment, we’ve got to start looking at smarter ways of doing things and rail is often the answer.

“Our governments should be looking at rail as a realistic, sensible solution for getting trucks off our roads and boosting employment.”